Thoughts on Identity and Diversity for Hispanic Heritage Month (Part 5)

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Chapter 5

This blog post is part of a series for Hispanic Heritage Month. To read the last entry in the series, click here.

As Hispanic Heritage Month draws to a close, I want to leave you with some final thoughts on identity and diversity.

Throughout my life and career, my thinking on identity has evolved – thanks in part to the diverse mix of policy research I've been honored to be a part of, the amazing research colleagues I've been fortunate to work with and learn from, and my family and friends whose support and love have been there when I most needed it. I believe that if we are to be a society that embraces human dignity and human rights, we should celebrate people in the entirety of their varied cultural makeup.

Moreover, we should recognize and value diversity *within groups*. We are not monolithic in our identity. Hispanics can be Catholic or Evangelical or Muslim; male, female, or some other gender; impoverished, middle income, wealthy; and, yes, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. Increasingly, we are a nation of mixed race and ethnicities and I love that about us. Besides being Latino, I take great pride in being a parent, grandparent, spouse, and friend, as well as a statistician, policy researcher, photographer and grill master.

Everywhere I look, there are many other Latino voices to be heard and appreciated. The future of Latino identity will be defined by those who are under the age of 40, made up mostly of millennials and younger. They now form the majority of the Latino population.

And there is some evidence that it is already taking shape. Just as Latino young adults embraced the terms Chicano and Mestizo in the 1970s, today's Latino millennials are drawn to the term *Latinx* which is gender neutral. And in another generation, who knows what new terms will help Latinos describe who they are.

And yet, my own identity journey continues, even though I consider myself to be a *viejito*, an elderly man. Coming to the U.S. Census Bureau as director of the largest federal statistical agency propelled my identity journey in ways I had not imagined. I am bringing my whole self to this leadership role and using that to propel excellence in all we do at the Bureau. And being a public servant and a Latino, I have begun making official public statements in Spanish. It's a challenge,

but also a labor of love, as in all things that I do. I suppose in some way I am still a bit like my 4-year-old self, taking chances in my newest garden, but all in the spirit of learning and helping.

So, during this Hispanic Heritage Month, please join me in celebrating the rich diversity and culture of the many Latino populations that have been bestowed upon our nation. I believe our collective diversity – Latino or otherwise – makes our nation stronger and more special. Let's all take our own journeys of identity and grow from the paths we have chosen. We'll all be better human beings for it.